

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 151252Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8987

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4554

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT
SUBJECT: AMB'S CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN APRIL 14

REF: ADDIS ABABA 4512

SO THAT BUREAU WILL HAVE FULL FLAVOR OF SUBJECT CONVERSATION,
FOLLOWING POINTS, WHEN COMBINED WITH REFTEL, CONSTITUTE FULL
MEMCOM.

1. WHEN HE ASKED ME TO KEEP HIS REMARKS ON "PERSONAL AND
OFF-RECORD BASIS" (PARA 4), I INDICATED I COULD NOT DO SO BE-
CAUSE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO MY SUPERIORS IN USG.
2. IN DISCUSSING MY RECOMMENDATION (PARAS 6 AND 7)
I POINTED OUT THERE WOULD INEVITABLY BE ADVERSE PERCEPTIONS IN
U.S. ABOUT ANTI-U.S. ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS BY RADICALS, REGARDLESS
OF WHETHER SECRETARY'S PARTY COMES OR NOT.
3. HE SAID SOMEWHAT EMOTIONALLY (PARA 4) THAT HE HADEBEEN
PRACTICALLY ALONE IN ARGUING AGAINST RADICAL DECISIONS OF THE
DIRG THAT HE DOESN'T AGREE WITH. HE SAID IT IS PROBLEMATIC
HOW LONG HE WILL SURVIVE AS FONMIN. COMMENT: THIS SQUARES
WITH OTHER INFO--THAT MODERATES ARE INEFFECTIVE AND THAT KIFLE

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IS ON THE SKIDS.

4. I SAID I APPRECIATED THE ROLE HE WAS PLAYING WITHIN THE

GOVT, AND HE HAD MY SYMPATHY AND GOOD WISHES. HOWEVER, I HAD TO LOOK VERY HARD AT THE MAJOR ELEMENTS IN U.S.-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS, AND I WAS DISTURBED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT I COULD SEE. THERE WERE LIMITS TO USG FORBEARANCE AND TO EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE EPMG AGAINST THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS OWN DECISIONS. THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS COSTS IN ALL OF EPMG'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS IF THOSE RELATIONS REMAINED IN THE HANDS OF RADICALS WHO PLACED GREATER IMPORTANCE ON INTERNAL REVOLUTIONARY ACTIONS THAN ON ETHIOPIA'S EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THIS TO BE TRUE, BUT SAID NOTHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT IT AT PRESENT. HE SAID EPMG HAS NOT EVOLVED VIABLE INSTITUTIONS FOR DECISIONMAKING, AND THAT HE WAS APPALLED AT THE UNINFORMED AND EMOTIONAL PEOPLE IN THE DIRG HE HAD TO CONTEND WITH. HE SAID SOME COMPLIMENTARY THINGS ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER CHANGING AND REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETIES, WHICH HE THOUGHT HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON IN ETHIOPIA.

5. I WAS QUITE DIRECT IN TELLING HIM (PARA 8) THAT WHILE I UNDERSTOOD THE LIMITATIONS OF HIS OWN ABILITY TO AFFECT DECISIONS, WE SIMPLY HAD TO FIND A WAY TO MAKE SURE THAT AMERICAN CITIZENS IN ETHIOPIA WERE NOT TARGETS OF RADICAL VIOLENCE. THE GOVT MEDIA HAD ATTACKED THE U.S. AND HAD NOT SAID A SINGLE WORD ABOUT ETHIOPIA'S FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. FOR OVER THREE MONTHS, AND AS I HAD TOLD HIM REPEATEDLY I FELT THERE WAS SERIOUS DANGER THAT RADICALS MIGHT BELIEVE VIOLENCE AGAINST AMERICANS TO BE IN LINE WITH GOVT POLICY. THERE WOULD BE STRONG REACTIONS IN THE USG, AND BY ME, IF ANY AMERICANS ARE HURT AS A RESULT OF THE EPMG'S INATTENTION TO THIS VERY REAL PROBLEM. HE DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS, WHICH I CONSIDER SOMEWHAT OMINOUS.

6. HE WANTED TO DISCUSS PROS AND CONS OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AGAIN THE NEXT DAY (APRIL 15) BEFORE I DECIDED ON MY RECOMMENDATION. I SAID TIME WAS VERY SHORT AND I HAD ALREADY DECIDED ALONG LINES I HAD OUTLINED, BUT IF I HAD FURTHER THOUGHTS I WOULD GET BACK TO HIM. HE SAID HE HAD TO GO TO DAKAR, LEAVING EITHER FRIDAY OR SATURDAY, MAY 16 OR 17, AND WOULD MAKE TIME

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TO SEE ME BEFORE LEAVING IF I WISHED.

7. HE CLOSED BY SAYING HE HAD WANTED TO TALK TO ME BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE F-5E'S THE FOLLOWING MORNING, SO AS TO AVOID ANY SUSPICION ON MY PART THAT HE HAD WAITED TO HAVE THE F-5E'S IN HAND BEFORE PRESENTING THIS PROBLEM CONCERNING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT.

COMMENT: FURTHER REFLECTION HAS NOT RPT NOT CAUSED ME TO ALTER
JUDGMENTS MADE IN REFTTEL. ONE ELEMENT IS WORTH ADDING: THAT
KIFLE'S FAILURE TO CAST DOUBT IN ANY WAY ON TWO MAJOR FACTORS--
THAT GOVT WOULD ASSURE SECURITY
OF PARTY, AND THAT SUBSTANCE OF CONVERSATIONS WOULD NOT REFLECT
RADICAL ATTITUDES--SUPPORT ASSESSMENT THAT THIS IS NOT A
DISGUISED ATTEMPT BY EPMG (READ DIRG VICE-CHAIRMEN) TO FEND
OFF VISIT. IF THAT HAD BEEN WHAT KIFLE WAS CHARGED WITH
ACHIEVING, HE WOULD HAVE FOUND WAYS TO INDICATE SOME
UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THOSE TWO VITAL FACTORS, PERHAPS BY SAYING
EPMG "WOULD DO ITS BEST" TO HANDLE THEM. THUS I AM REINFORCED
IN MY FEELING THAT KIFLE'S INTENT IS JUST WHAT HE SAID IT WAS:
TO LIMIT DAMAGE TO AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF ETHIOPIA BY AVOIDING
GLARE OF ADVERSE PUBLICITY THAT WOULD BE GENERATED BY PRESS
PARTY. FYI SEPTTEL REPORTS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT UNLEASHING
OF RADICALS IS WELL ON THE WAY AND A TIMETABLE HAS BEEN SET,
AS KIFLE SAID.
HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, CITIZEN PROTECTION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS04554
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760143-0629
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760460/aaaabynk.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS, EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS, EXDIS
Reference: 76 ADDIS ABABA 4512
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <15 OCT 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMB'S CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN APRIL 14
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, ET, US, (KIFLE WODAJJO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006